

**DECLARATION OF MICHELLE BRANÉ**

**EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF TOGETHER AND FREE**

1. I am Michelle Brané, Executive Director of Together and Free. Together and Free is a nonprofit organization that provides emergency and ongoing support services to asylum seeking families impacted by federal immigration policies.
2. I have more than 25 years of experience working on immigration and human rights issues. Prior to my work at Together and Free, I served for three years as the Executive Director for the Department of Homeland Security's Family Reunification Task Force, and then as DHS's Ombudsman for Immigration Detention. Before that, I was the Director of the Migrant Rights and Justice program at the Women's Refugee Commission for almost 15 years, where I worked on projects related to immigration custody, family detention and separation, and access to asylum at the U.S. border. I hold a JD from Georgetown University.
3. Together and Free has been hearing from family members of individuals in immigration detention at Bluebonnet Detention Center in Anson, TX, who fear being removed to El Salvador because officers have distributed notices of designation as Alien Enemies to individuals and told them they will be removed.
4. On April 17 one of our partners received a call from the wife of a man being detained at Bluebonnet. The detainee told his wife that Venezuelans at Bluebonnet are receiving notices accusing them of being in Tren de Aragua and saying they will be deported. He sent her a tiktok with various detainees saying they were being accused of being enemies of the state and Tren de Aragua members, and that they were being asked to sign papers and were being removed but they did not know where. Several said that whether they

signed or not, they would be removed.

[https://www.tiktok.com/@aviicrespo0/video/7494430422365965573?\\_r=1&\\_t=ZM-8vcgOxvfBnK](https://www.tiktok.com/@aviicrespo0/video/7494430422365965573?_r=1&_t=ZM-8vcgOxvfBnK)

5. On April 17 at 10:36 I spoke to the sister of Luis Yoender Mercado. She informed me that she spoke to him this afternoon. Luis is detained at Bluebonnet. He has a master Calendar hearing scheduled on April 23, 2025. He told his sister that several people had received notices and were told by officers that they were being sent to El Salvador.
6. I also received messages on a listserv from several contacts indicating that people at Bluebonnet were receiving notices that they would be removed. The message says, "We just heard that it looks like more removals are being planned. We got this message from a member: "Hi, ICE moved a large group of Venezuelans to Bluebonnet earlier this week and some of them have alerted counsel that they received a notice minutes ago saying they would be removed under the AEA. The notice was in English and had a box for people to indicate they want to contest the designation. People should check on their Venezuelan clients if they've been moved to Bluebonnet and tell them to mark "I contest" in the notice."

Executed on 17th of April, 2025, in University Park, Maryland.

*Michelle Brané*

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